

Executive Summary
Great Lakes Legacy Act Project Description:
St. Louis River/Interlake/Duluth Tar Site Remediation
St. Louis River Area of Concern

The Proposal

Congress intended that the Great Lakes Legacy Act aid in the remediation of sediments in Areas of Concern around the Great Lakes, including the St. Louis River site (the Site) in which the remediation discussed in this Proposal will occur. The applicants, along with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), have labored for the past decade to reach consensus on an appropriate remedy with a wide variety of public and private stakeholders. Peer reviews by US EPA, the Corps of Engineers and a panel of nationally known experts have helped form the consensus.

The MPCA is in the process of issuing a final decision for the remedy, which is expected to be a hybrid remedy combining dredging and capping. Its decision will be based on an evaluation of alternatives and a review of the short-term and long-term effects of the alternatives on human health and the environment as described in the approved Feasibility Study. There is no source at or near the Site that would lead to recontamination of the areas to be addressed by the Proposal. The applicants have committed to MPCA that, absent irregularities in MPCA's final decision, they will undertake the remedy for the expected alternative. The non-Federal share of funding for the Project will exceed the 35% requirement, and all funding for operations and maintenance will come from non-Federal sources.

Project Objectives

Any remedy for the Site must pass the threshold criterion of protecting human health and the environment. However, it must also take into account the interests of shipping, public recreation, and wildlife habitat, each of which contributes to the quality of life in the Duluth-Superior area. The applicants have worked with all stakeholders, using an innovative public involvement process that has identified and balanced those competing interests. Through the use of an innovative combination of capping and dredging technologies, the Project will permit continued shipping activities, protect the public from any direct contact with contaminants, and enhance aquatic habitat and recreational areas.

The challenge posed by multiple competing interests is likely to be encountered at numerous upcoming sediment cleanups. GLLA funding, if awarded, will provide tangible evidence that innovative technologies (such as surcharging), and innovative decision-making processes (such as use of peer review and extensive stakeholder participation) can accelerate remediation of Areas of Concern all around the Great Lakes.

Schedule

The availability of funds in 2004 motivated the parties to select a remedy expeditiously. Both the MPCA and the applicants are now working hard to complete a significant portion of the remedy this year. Access to Federal funds will greatly improve the prospects for accelerated remediation in this and coming years.